

Statement by National Gambling Impact Study Commission Members

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We thank you, Senators Leahy and Brownback and other colleagues who join you in proposing to ban legal gambling on high school, collegiate or Olympic competitive athletic events.

Four years ago, with Public Law 104-169, Congress created the National Gambling Impact Study Commission and mandated its nine appointees, including us, to analyze the social and economic impacts of legal gambling in America. After receiving over 140 hours of testimony and initiating independent research on adult and juvenile gambling in America, we sent you our 76 recommendations on June 20, 1999. These recommendations address findings in six areas: regulation of gambling; problem and pathological gambling; Native American gambling; technology and the future of gambling; gambling's impact on people and places; and future research needs.

One of those recommendations was to do specifically what you now propose in this bill. Recommendation number 7 clearly states: "The Commission recommends that betting on collegiate and amateur athletic events that is currently legal be banned altogether."

The Commission's majority vote was based on at least four convictions:

First, that juvenile problem and pathological gambling in our country has increased to an alarming level. A meta-analysis completed by the Harvard Medical School Division of Addictions estimated in 1997 that there were 7.9 million juvenile gamblers who were problem or pathological.

Second, that betting on collegiate sports events by our youth was a significant contributing factor to that population, with bookies available on hundreds of college and university campuses in the nation.

Third, the ideals of amateur and collegiate sports are undermined by a federal law that sanctioned bets on these events that originate throughout the nation, yet are received and placed only in Nevada.

Fourth, that legal sports betting and the publishing of point spreads in many mainstream news publications set a dangerous precedent. In fact, act as a springboard to further propel the enormous illegal sports gaming industry in this country.

Sports betting is legitimized by those who seek to profit from public interest in betting and

by those who consider it a harmless pastime. But, what is a harmless Avicé® for some is a life-altering catastrophe for many others. Moreover, the corrosive impact on sports is only hinted at by the occasional story of ruined athletes and ruined lives that comes to light. It is one of the worst aspects of the spreading culture of gambling in this country. Betting on school games-at whatever level-is one place, at least, where people of good will should be able to draw the line. It is no coincidence, for example, that even Nevada prohibits bets on games between schools in their state.

The Commission majority weighed the aspirations we have for children and the efforts of parents and school officials who seek to inculcate strong character traits and self-respect in millions of young Americans against the \$2.3 billion in profits for Nevada casinos. And our decision was easy.

It was easy then and it is easy now. College sports coaches rarely take public positions on legislation such as this. The fact that dozens of the best known coaches of this nation are asking Congress to ban betting on amateur and collegiate sports competition is a profound statementBone deserving of not only our ears, but our action.

We join them today in respectfully asking the members of this Committee and the entire Congress to protect what has been one of the strongest examples of American idealism B amateur and collegiate sports.

March 28, 2000

To:

Attached you will find comments that Richard C. Leone and Leo T. McCarthy have prepared for the committee. Both Mr. Leone and Mr. McCarthy were members of the National Gambling Impact Study Commission.